

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Partnerships Key to Growth in India, Burma, USAID's Shah Says

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 14 March 2013

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development is working in partnership with governments, companies and civil society to leverage its investments for economic growth in India and Burma, says USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, who recently returned from visits to both countries.

"And perhaps most important, we are bringing real innovation to the partnerships to deliver the best results," he told journalists March 13 at the State Department's Foreign Press Center in Washington

INDIA

Shah said USAID has turned its previous development efforts in India into an "innovation laboratory" that is combining resources and talent to find solutions to challenges related to extreme poverty in the country and other parts of the world.

He noted that USAID works with the laboratory, local institutions and the private sector to bring an end to preventable child death and to ensure that "every child lives to experience their 5th birthday." He added that in June 2012, India, the United States and Ethiopia co-hosted a conference in Washington devoted to that goal.

Other partnerships have attracted funding from Indian philanthropists and business leaders, Shah said. Those funds are being used to develop medical technologies like diagnostics for tuberculosis and other diseases. Another technology being developed by Indian companies is a zinc syrup that is used to treat acute diarrhea in young children. The syrup can be distributed around the world at low cost, he said.

Shah said India is emerging as a development partner for other countries. He pointed out that while he was there, more than 200 agricultural fellows from African countries were training at India's universities as part of the Partnership for an Evergreen Revolution launched in 2010 by President Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to help farmers and create sustainable economic growth around the world.

BURMA

Shah said preventable child death also is the focus of a public-private partnership in Burma. USAID, the government of Burma, the U.S. pharmaceutical company Johnson & Johnson, the Laerdal medical device manufacturer of Norway, and several health care

practitioner associations have set a goal to save 20,000 children in the country from dying from preventable causes by 2015.

"That's achievable because we know what the causes of death are," Shah said, naming diarrhea, malaria, pneumonia and the inability to breathe during the first 48 hours of life as the most common causes. He said the partnership is probably the first large national effort where "the government will be in the lead." Burma's government is doubling its investments to prevent child death, Shah said.

A highlight of his trip to Burma, Shah said, was at a technology park in Rangoon, where he met hundreds of computer science students and entrepreneurs and announced a new partnership with communication technology giant Cisco Systems Inc. to create technology academies around the country. "The network academies will bring the best of American technology to that setting, allowing students to connect around the world and allowing students to upgrade their technology skills and be able to be part of a hopefully future thriving innovation economy," he said.

He noted that earlier, USAID Chief Innovation Officer Maura O'Neill led a group of corporate leaders from Cisco, Google, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft and Intel to Burma to explore opportunities to bring affordable access to the Internet to the country and increase transparency and efficiency in government.

Shah said he also talked with civil society leaders about challenges they continue to face: "being heard by government and being part of the hopefully increasingly open processes." He said USAID is working with Burma's government "to ensure that civil society is protected, has the space to operate effectively, and is connected to the reforms that are taking place."

"These types of new partnerships conditioned on local investments and leadership, conditioned on good policies and efforts to fight corruption and usher in democracy, and conditioned on measuring and delivering results, do have the capacity to expand the reach of a global innovation economy," he said.

Conference Acts to Protect Sharks, Mantas, Exotic Hardwoods

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 14 March 2013

Washington — A 12-day conference on conservation of the world's fauna and flora ended March 14 with multinational agreements to strengthen protections for several species of shark and manta ray that are threatened with extinction if overfishing is not stopped.

The conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has come to "an historic moment in shark and ray conservation," according to U.S. delegation head Bryan Arroyo, who is the assistant director for international affairs at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The 170 nations that participated in the meeting in Bangkok "have taken decisive action to protect these vulnerable species from over-exploitation for international trade," Arroyo said in a statement issued as the meeting concluded March 14.

For 20 years, conservation advocates have been attempting to gain protection from overfishing for oceanic whitetip sharks and three species of hammerheads. Sharks and their fins are in high demand as foods in some countries. This appetite has driven global populations of sharks into serious decline.

"The science that justifies the need for these proposals is indisputable," Arroyo said.

The Bangkok action means that commercial trade in sharks will require CITES permits and the presentation of evidence that the catch is made legally and sustainably.

The manta ray has also been ranked as a potentially endangered species because its growth and reproduction habits do not sufficiently replenish a population challenged by commercial exploitation.

CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon said the actions are important in affirming the merit of the treaty and in the protection of wildlife.

"The international community has today decided to make best use of this pragmatic and effective agreement to help it along the path to sustainability in our oceans and forests," said Scanlon, who previously served in positions at the U.N. Environment Programme and in the government's environmental agency in his native Australia.

TROPICAL WOODS PROTECTION, OTHER ACTIONS

International trade in certain rosewoods and ebonyes from Asia, Central America and Madagascar will come under CITES protection as a result of another conference vote. Unregulated logging is likely to threaten the survival of these highly valued tropical woods without action, which is supported by nations that are home to these species.

African nations acted together to respond to an escalating number of illegal elephant kills and the persistent trade in their ivory tusks. According to a CITES press release, regulations for trading in elephants and elephant products were "revised, modernized and strengthened."

The slaughter and exploitation of rhinoceros are reaching crisis levels, conservationists say, as organized criminal groups poach the animals for their horns, which are thought to have medicinal powers in some cultures. The conference has urged member states to prosecute these crime rings, with penalties severe enough to act as a deterrent to poaching and trade.

The conference also agreed to organize a CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force to improve international cooperation in stopping the illegal trade in horn. Member states decided to develop public education strategies to better inform people about the economic and environmental consequences of illegal wildlife trafficking.

Cooperation and effectiveness in law enforcement received a new level of attention at this conference, held during the 40th anniversary of the CITES agreement. Wildlife enforcement networks organized on regional levels met for the first time in parallel sessions at the conference. Wildlife incident support teams will be formed, by conference agreement, to deploy experts where they are needed in the event of a significant poaching incident or a large-scale seizure of illicit wildlife products.

The United States delegation further met its goals for the CITES meeting with consensus approval for a musical instrument passport program. Many instruments, some antique, once were made from materials that are now protected. This program will let musicians cross international borders with a single document that sanctions instruments made or decorated with materials such as tropical hardwood or elephant ivory.

In a post-conference interview, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Daniel Ashe called the U.S. delegation's efforts to promote national priorities at the CITES meeting "the most successful in recent memory." The conference had an "extremely ambitious agenda," Ashe said. "We were able to get widespread support from the international conservation community for our priority issues."

U.S. Rebalances Strategic Focus Toward Asia-Pacific

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 13 March 2013

Washington — The Obama administration is shifting the focus of long-term U.S. foreign policy to the Asia-Pacific region with the aim of restoring U.S. economic strength, the foundation of U.S. global leadership.

"After a decade defined by 9/11, two wars and a financial crisis, President Obama took office [in 2009] determined to restore the foundation of the United States' global leadership — our economic strength at home," National Security Advisor Tom Donilon said March 11 in a speech to The Asia Society.

The president ordered a strategic assessment of U.S. foreign policy that led to the determination that U.S. engagement was “overweighted” in some regions, including U.S. military actions in the Middle East, and “underweighted” in Asia, Donilon said.

“Our guiding insight was that Asia’s future and the future of the United States are deeply and increasingly linked,” Donilon said. “Economically, Asia already accounts for more than one-quarter of global GDP [gross domestic product]. Over the next five years, nearly half of all growth outside the United States is expected to come from Asia.”

The security adviser said all elements of U.S. power will be involved in the rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific – military, political, trade and investment, and U.S. values.

He also emphasized what the rebalancing does not mean. “It doesn’t mean diminishing ties to important partners in any other region. It does not mean containing China or seeking to dictate terms in Asia. And it isn’t just a matter of our military presence.”

The adviser said the United States will proceed with the rebalancing in five channels: 1) strengthening its alliances in Asia, 2) deepening partnerships with emerging powers, 3) building a constructive relationship with China, 4) bolstering regional institutions and 5) promoting trade and investment throughout the Asia-Pacific.

ALLIANCES

Donilon said that the U.S.-Japan security treaty signed in 1960 is the cornerstone of regional peace and prosperity. “Looking ahead, there is scarcely a regional or global challenge in the president’s agenda where the United States does not look to Japan to play an important role,” Donilon said.

The U.S. security treaty with the Republic of Korea makes possible trilateral cooperation from Japan, Korea and the United States to keep northeast Asia free from war and contain the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, he said.

EMERGING POWERS

With regard to emerging powers, Donilon said the United States is eager to build a vibrant relationship with India.

“From Prime Minister Singh’s visit in 2009 to the president’s trip to India in 2010, the United States has made clear at every turn that we don’t just accept India’s rise, we fervently support it,” he said, adding that “U.S. and Indian interests powerfully converge in the Asia-Pacific, where India has much to give and much to gain. ...

In the past year, India-ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] trade increased by 37 percent to \$80 billion.”

He named Indonesia as another emerging power that has the potential to become a global partner with the United States.

CHINA

Building a broad, productive and constructive relationship with China is the third element of the U.S. strategic rebalancing. “There are few diplomatic, economic or security challenges in the world that can be addressed without China at the table,” Donilon said.

The security adviser said it is critical that the United States and China strengthen their economic relationship, which is marked by increasing interdependence. He also called for better communications between the U.S. and Chinese militaries to “demonstrate practical cooperation on issues that matter to both sides.”

REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS

As for bolstering regional institutions, Donilon said they are important to deal with Asia’s urgent need for economic, diplomatic and security-related rules and understandings. He singled out ASEAN, consisting of 10 member states across the Indian and Pacific oceans, for having a critical role in handling the territorial disputes in the resource-rich South China and East China seas.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Donilon said the centerpiece of the economic rebalancing is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). He said the TPP involves 11 countries on the eastern and western shores of the Pacific that are negotiating an economic agreement that eliminates market access barriers to goods and services and addresses new, 21st-century trade issues.

“We can get this done,” Donilon said. “In fact, the United States is working hard with the other parties to complete negotiations by the end of 2013.”

U.S. on Track to Meet Goal of Doubling Exports

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 13 March 2013

Washington — President Obama says the U.S. economy is on its way to meet the goal of doubling exports from 2010 levels by the end of 2014, and he urged U.S. policymakers to advance free trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership to help sustain the momentum in growth.

Speaking at a March 12 meeting of the President’s Export

Council at the White House, Obama said “we are well on our way to meeting a very ambitious goal that we set several years ago to double U.S. exports,” and that many of the jobs recently added to the economy “have been export-driven” from a wide variety of sectors.

“The question now becomes how do we sustain this momentum?” he said. “Part of it is making sure that we get in place strong trade deals.”

U.S. lawmakers have ratified trade agreements with Panama, Colombia and the Republic of Korea in recent years, and the president said his administration is “moving aggressively” on the high-standards trade deal known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The TPP “sets a bar that ensures that trade is fair and free. And for those of us who abide by high labor standards and high environmental standards, obviously being able to lock in those kinds of high standards in the fastest-growing region of the world and the most populous region of the world can yield enormous benefits and help to generate billions of dollars in trade and millions of jobs,” he said.

In addition, the United States is working to expand trade with its largest trading partner, the European Union (EU), through the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which aims to break down some existing barriers between the two and to smooth differences in regulatory approaches, he said.

Obama said the EU is “hungrier for a deal than they have been in the past” as it seeks “a recipe for growth” following austerity measures put in place due to economic recession in the absence of “a more aggressive trade component.”

In discussions with European partners, “we’ve been able to narrow some of the differences,” he said.

“We’ve identified on the regulatory side, customs side, areas where we can synchronize without hurting either side, but simply lubricating more effective trade between the two countries,” Obama said.

Council member and Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar from Minnesota said within the United States, the “growing political support for fair trade agreements is huge,” thanks to their potential to create more jobs.

“It creates a kind of support for trade that is much more organic and really goes in a grass-roots way across the country. And I think we have to remember that as a piece of what’s good for the economy, but also it will grow support for this new global economy,” she said.

TOURISM

Klobuchar also said tourism levels have grown, with a 50 percent increase from China. Many Asian tourists, she added, are visiting the Mall of America located in her home state.

The president said revenue from tourism counts as a U.S. export, and he said the United States has been able to accelerate its visa services to encourage more travelers.

“We’ve been able to make sure that we are out there actively seeking visitors to come here and promoting the U.S. as a tourist destination,” he said. These efforts include Brazil, where “we’ve been able to cut down visa times drastically.”

“We’ve seen as a consequence some significant expansion in tourism out of South America because of some of the steps that we’ve taken,” he said, and Brazilians now make up one of the largest groups of visitors to Florida.

The president said small- and medium-sized businesses also need to benefit from the increase in trade. There is room for such enterprises, Obama said, not only to supply large businesses, but also to enter directly into the global trade market with direct exports.

The United States also needs to prepare its infrastructure to respond to global climate change by managing its inland waterways such as the Mississippi River, where water levels are dropping, Obama said.

“Whether or not we can continue to use barges to move a lot of product out of the American heartland to ports around the world, that’s going to depend on our infrastructure,” he said.

To meet its trade and export goals, the United States will need to continue “making great products and delivering great services,” the president told the council, and that will require hiring “a great workforce.”

Ancient Persian Ruler Influenced Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Democracy

By Lea Terhune | Staff Writer | 13 March 2013

Washington — The discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder was a hundred years in the future when Thomas Jefferson and other founders of the United States adopted the progressive ideas of the ancient Persian ruler Cyrus the Great. They knew of Cyrus through classical Greek writers and Biblical accounts.

A copy of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* that belonged to Thomas Jefferson is on display with artifacts on loan from the British Museum in the exhibition *The Cyrus Cylinder*

and *Ancient Persia: A New Beginning*, at the Smithsonian Institution's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington. The exhibition also will tour Houston, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The *Cyropaedia* is a partly fictional portrayal of the life and deeds of Cyrus the Great (c. 580–530 B.C.), who founded the Achaemenid Empire, which continued for nearly 200 years. He created an efficient bureaucracy to oversee disparate cultures within his vast empire and governed with tolerance that evoked admiration in the ancient world. The book was written a century after Cyrus died. It was not meant to be a factual history, but it captured ideas that characterized his rule.

Julian Raby, director of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, said before the exhibition's opening that Jefferson possessed two editions of the *Cyropaedia*. The one on display, usually kept at the Library of Congress, dates from 1767. It features Greek and Latin parallel texts on facing pages.

"What's extraordinary is that he scratched out one line," said Raby. "The particular passage that was crossed out is a problematic passage in the manuscript ... it is quite clear that Jefferson himself must have been collating line by line between his earlier edition and this later edition."

The bold black line over the dubious Greek passage may be seen in the exhibition. Raby said that it shows the degree of attention Jefferson paid to this book.

A quote from Jefferson, taken from a letter to his grandson Francis Wayles Eppes, is featured on the gallery wall above the *Cyropaedia*: "... I would advise you to undertake a regular course of History and Poetry in both languages. In Greek, go first thro' the *Cyropaedia*, and then read Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon's *Hellenus* and *Anabasis* ..." Benjamin Franklin also read the classics and was familiar with Xenophon's work.

British Museum Director Neil MacGregor noted that Jefferson's *Cyropedia* is the Glasgow edition. Jefferson had a close intellectual connection to the Scottish Enlightenment, thanks to his tutelage as an undergraduate at the College of William and Mary by William Small, a Scotsman from Aberdeen. Scottish intellectuals referred to the accounts of Cyrus in their efforts to sort out the "pressing question of church and state."

The tolerance shown by Cyrus toward diverse religions and cultures was a historical first. British Museum exhibition curator John Curtis said, "The Cyrus Cylinder and associated objects represent a new beginning for the Ancient Near East." The idea of freedom of religion appealed to the founders of the United States, which was

originally colonized, in part, by Europeans escaping religious persecution.

One revelation of the Cyrus Cylinder exhibition, according to MacGregor, is "the importance of Cyrus to those who wrote the Constitution of the United States." He added, "The story of Persia — Iran — is part of the story of modern United States."

He said that although 18th-century Europeans read and commented on the tenets of religious freedom and tolerance set down by Cyrus, only the United States' founders enshrined them in law.

NASA Rover Finds Traces of Habitable Environment on Mars

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 12 March 2013

Washington — Seven months after the rover Curiosity landed on Mars, scientists announced March 12 that they've found what they were looking for: an environment that could have supported microbial life.

Analysis of powdered material drilled out of a sedimentary rock in the Gale Crater landing site shows the territory was part of an ancient river system or an occasionally wet lake bed that was capable of sustaining certain forms of microbial life.

"We have found a habitable environment," said John Grotzinger, Curiosity project scientist, at a March 12 briefing. He described an environment that was, in its day, "benign and supportive of life."

The California Institute of Technology scientist said that "a microbe could have lived in, and maybe even prospered in" the environmental conditions revealed through analysis of the rock sample.

The rock sample showed traces of sulfur, nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and carbon — some of the key chemical ingredients for life. The sample — the first from Mars to ever undergo this degree of analysis — showed past signs of moisture sufficient to support simple life forms and no sign of excessive acidity. The analysis also revealed traces of minerals that could have provided an electron flow, which sustains certain microbial life on Earth.

"This is fantastic," said Michael Meyer, lead scientist for NASA's Mars Exploration Program. Decades of Mars exploration by previous orbiters and rovers have contributed to the mission's success in landing the craft at a site where the rover found all the elements scientists sought as evidence of a once-habitable environment on the red planet.

With the habitability question answered, Grotzinger said, the mission will now proceed in a deliberate way to search out signs of carbon, the basis for all life forms as we know them.

With success achieved so early in the Curiosity mission, will the craft be able to move forward to find a sign of life? Grotzinger pointed out that Curiosity is neither designed nor equipped as a life-detection mission.

"If there was microbial metabolism going on, we really wouldn't have the ability to measure that," Grotzinger said.

What Curiosity still can and will do is travel farther across the Martian surface to other interesting targets that could reveal more types of rocks and minerals that tell other, different stories about Mars.

"The team is just delighted to be waking up every morning and looking at what's happening on this different planet," said Paul Mahaffy, principal investigator for the sample analysis component of the Mars investigation. "It's just tremendously exciting."

Hundreds of scientists have contributed to Curiosity's findings, Grotzinger said, building on the engineering and technological breakthroughs of earlier generations.

New Evidence on Earth and Within It Affirms Climate Change

12 March 2013

Washington — Two research projects releasing data in early March provide new evidence that the Earth is warmer than it used to be. One group used satellite data to track the spread of plant life into higher latitudes than cold temperatures ever allowed in the past. Another group has examined ice and sediment cores gathered around the globe to calculate an unbroken record of temperatures over the past 11,300 years.

Examining satellite data from 1982 to 2011, a NASA-funded study found that the ground vegetation growing in 45 degrees north latitude to the Arctic Ocean looks more like what was found 4 to 6 degrees further south 30 years ago.

"It's like Winnipeg, Manitoba, moving to Minneapolis-St. Paul in only 30 years," said Compton Tucker of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, a co-author of the results published March 10 in *Nature Climate Change*.

Warming trends have extended the growing season, resulting in large patches of "vigorously productive vegetation" that span a third of the northern landscape,

according to a NASA news release.

"Higher northern latitudes are getting warmer, Arctic sea ice and the duration of snow cover are diminishing, the growing season is getting longer and plants are growing more," said Ranga Myneni of Boston University's Department of Earth and Environment.

Over some 9 million square kilometers — an area roughly equal to the contiguous United States — the plant life covering the landscape above the 45th parallel north resembles the 1982 landscape 400 to 700 kilometers south.

What Myneni calls an "amplified greenhouse effect" is creating ecosystems that produce vegetation unlike any seen in the past. Increased concentrations of greenhouse gases trap Earth's heat and prevent it from venting into space, creating warming on the planetary surface. Warming on the ground melts the polar sea ice and snow cover, which, consequently, creates darker oceans and landscapes, further multiplying the heating effect.

If changes similar to those of the last 30 years occur in the future, the result might be increasingly temperate ecosystems at higher latitudes, but that is not inevitable. Forest fires, pest infestations or summer drought could intervene to restrain the vegetation growth.

WHAT THE ICE BORES SHOW

A joint research project tapping ice and sediment cores at 73 locations around the world has allowed scientists to calculate temperatures more than 11 centuries in the past. The scientists from Oregon State University (OSU) and Harvard University find that the 21st-century planet is warmer than the globe has been during 70 to 80 percent of the last 11,300 years.

"This research shows that we've experienced almost the same range of temperature change since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution as over the previous 11,000 years of Earth history — but this change happened a lot more quickly," said Candace Major, a program director at the National Science Foundation, the funding source for the work.

The history revealed through the ice and sediment borings shows that during the last 5,000 years, Earth cooled on average about .7 degrees Celsius until the last 100 years, when the evidence shows the planet warmed by the same amount.

Other researchers have produced climate forecasts that project warming temperatures could bring an increase of 1 to 6 degrees by the end of this century, largely due to increased carbon emissions.

"What is most troubling is that this warming will be significantly greater than at any time during the past 11,300 years," said Peter Clark, an OSU paleoclimatologist and a co-author of this research.

The researchers used fossils from ocean sediment cores and terrestrial archives to reconstruct this 11-millennia temperature record. The chemical and physical characteristic of the fossils provide sufficient information for researchers to calculate corresponding temperatures during their lifetimes.

The slowness of temperature change over the first 11 millennia compared to the rapid change in the last 100 years leads the researchers to the conclusion that carbon emissions entering the atmosphere as a result of human activities caused the warming trend.

13 New Historic Landmarks Celebrate U.S. Diversity

12 March 2013

Washington — U.S. officials March 11 announced the designation of 13 new national historic landmarks that recognize a more complete story of America.

The new landmarks include an Alabama bridge that was the site of "Bloody Sunday" during the civil rights movement, a 400-year-old historic district showcasing the influence of Spanish culture in Puerto Rico, the home of author and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, and a historic stadium used by "Negro league" baseball teams in 20th-century segregated America.

"These national historic landmark designations span more than two centuries of our country's history, from 17th-century architecture to a Civil War battlefield to a 19th-century-Kentucky whiskey distillery that continued to operate through the Prohibition era," U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said in announcing the new landmarks, according to a March 11 Interior Department press release.

"Today's designations include significant sites that help tell the story of America and the contributions that all people from all walks of life have made as we strive for a more perfect union," Salazar said.

"From the Civil War to civil rights, to the struggles and accomplishments of women, African Americans and Latinos, these sites highlight the mosaic of our nation's historic past," said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis, who announced the new landmarks along with Salazar. "We are proud to administer the National Historic Landmarks Program to educate and inspire Americans through their country's rich and complex history."

National historic landmarks are nationally significant historic places that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. The program, established in 1935, is administered by the National Park Service on behalf of the secretary of the interior. Currently there are 2,540 designated national historic landmarks.

The new national historic landmarks include the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. On March 7, 1965, civil rights marchers drawing attention to the need for voting rights legislation were attacked by law enforcement officials as they crossed the span. The attack, which came to be known as "Bloody Sunday," contributed to the introduction and passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, considered to be the single most effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed by the U.S. Congress.

They also include the Old San Juan Historic District/Distrito Histórico del Viejo San Juan, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Old San Juan is the only existing representation of an almost 400-year-old Spanish Colonial city in the United States, and it contains the largest collection of buildings representing four centuries of Spanish culture, religion, politics and architecture. It is the oldest city within the United States and its territories. The district includes the oldest house, Christian church, executive mansion, convent and military defenses in the country as well.

The other new national historic landmarks are the Camden Amphitheatre and Public Library in Camden, Maine; the Camp Nelson Historic and Archeological District in Jessamine County, Kentucky; the Casa Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez, in San Juan, Puerto Rico; the Epic of American Civilization Murals at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire; the George T. Staggs Distillery in Franklin County, Kentucky; the Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Hartford, Connecticut; Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, New Jersey; Honey Springs Battlefield, in McIntosh and Muskogee counties of Oklahoma; Pear Valley, a wood-frame house in Eastville, Virginia; Second Presbyterian Church, an example of the Arts and Crafts design movement, in Chicago; and Yaddo, in Saratoga Springs, New York, one of the United States' oldest artists' retreats.

USAID Will Support Elections and Political Processes in Burma

11 March 2013

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has announced a three-year program to support elections and political processes in Burma to help the country in the run-up to general elections slated for 2015.

The announcement came March 8 during USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah's visit to Burma.

"Our new program will support the deepening of reforms in Burma, particularly the transition to a more democratic and inclusive political system," Shah said. "The program is part of our commitment to supporting and accelerating democratic reforms to promote rule of law and human rights, transparent governance, and vibrant civil societies that reflect the country's diversity."

The announcement came during his meetings with senior government officials in Naypyitaw and Rangoon, including Ministers in the President's Office Aung Min and Soe Thein, as well as Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Shwe Mann. Shah also stressed the U.S. commitment to supporting the peace process and the importance of unhindered humanitarian access to vulnerable populations.

The \$11 million program aims to help the government improve electoral administration to ensure free, fair, honest and credible elections in 2015; promote voter education; provide parliamentary strengthening assistance; and support political party development.

Key to the new program is civil society engagement, including a deliberate effort to strengthen the organizational capacity of local civil society organizations in their role as effective development partners in engaging with members of parliament, USAID said.

In separate meetings with the ministers of agriculture and health, Shah reinforced USAID's commitment to working together and ensuring an inclusive approach to development that accounts for the will of the people. Shah discussed findings from a recent USAID-funded analysis of food-security issues and announced USAID's recent accession to the membership of the 3MDG Fund focusing on maternal and child health.

Shah's trip builds on the joint U.S.-Burma Partnership for Democracy, Peace and Prosperity that President Obama launched during his 2012 visit to the country. The partnership prioritizes development activities that promote inclusion, transparency, accountability and local empowerment.

State's Fernandez Says U.S. Companies Can Help Southeast Asia

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 11 March 2013

Washington — During his two-week visit to Southeast Asia, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Jose Fernandez discussed ways U.S. private investment can help improve areas such as infrastructure and agricultural reform, and talked about

ways to advance the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as a regional free-trade agreement.

Speaking March 8 in Washington following his February 21-March 1 trip, Fernandez told reporters he was "struck by how vibrant the trade and investment relationship between the U.S. and Southeast Asia was, and also the amount of good will that we got from all sorts of government officials, as well as companies."

U.S. companies can take advantage of diaspora communities inside the United States to help build their overseas relationships, Fernandez said, and the presence of U.S. companies in Southeast Asia can promote corporate social responsibility that will help their employees and the local communities where they operate.

For developing countries in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, Fernandez said, there is a high priority on developing infrastructure to help create the conditions for economic growth, and during his trip he outlined ways U.S. companies can play a positive role.

"We felt that improving infrastructure in areas such as electricity, communications and roads would provide opportunities for U.S. companies to do business as well as to do some good. And we also felt that this was a strategic imperative for our approach to the region, because infrastructure was going to be one of the main topics of discussion in the decades to come," he said.

He said he also discussed how agricultural technology can help meet the growing demand for food as the world population increases from 7 billion people to 9 billion by 2050.

Through post-harvest technologies, developing countries can shorten the amount of time it takes for food to travel from farms to consumers. Currently, as much as 30 percent to 50 percent of their produce is lost on its way to markets. With improved technology and a shorter amount of time, "we will make a huge improvement in food security, and we will have done it without having to grow an additional crop," Fernandez said.

Throughout his trip, which took him to the Philippines, Burma, Thailand and Singapore, the Trans-Pacific Partnership was a topic of discussion. Fernandez said the Obama administration wants the TPP "to be a high-standard, 21st-century agreement."

On March 4, the 16th round of negotiations on the comprehensive trade agreement opened in Singapore, bringing 600 delegates from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

"It's our intention ... to complete that agreement by this year," Fernandez said. There are 11 member countries, but membership is "open to anybody who's willing to sign on to what we call 21st-century high standards, comprehensive standards," he said.

"Ultimately, our hope is that there will be more countries that will join, and that ultimately this could very well become sort of the Free Trade of the Asia Pacific agreement," he said.

When the TPP is completed, it will involve about 30 percent of the world's trade. Fernandez said the United States and European Union's proposed Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership would represent an additional 25 percent to 30 percent of free trade in the global economy, which "will change the trade dynamics in the world."

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